

FLORA AND FAUNA

Hoke County's total of 128 rare species ranks high compared to other North Carolina counties, especially those in the lower piedmont and inner coastal plain. It is a well-known fact among biologists that the counties at either end of the state - the mountains and the coast - support higher biological diversity than the middle sector, including rare flora and fauna. Between the mountain counties and those fronting the ocean, very few have more rare species within their borders than Hoke.

Fort Bragg accounts for most of the documented rare plants and animals. It also contains some of the most significant natural areas in the entire range of the longleaf pine ecosystem (Virginia to Texas). Fort Bragg supports many plant community types that are superb examples of their kind: pine-oak-wiregrass uplands, high diversity loamy swales, shrub-switchcane streamheads, and seepage bogs. In turn, these provide habitat for many rare plants and animals, including robust populations of five federally endangered species: red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*), St. Francis' satyr butterfly (*Neonympha mitchellii francisci*), Michaux's sumac (*Rhus michauxii*), chaffseed (*Schwalbea americana*), and roughleaf loosestrife (*Lysimachia asperulifolia*).

Two globally rare plant communities, the Little River Seepage Bank and the Little River Bluff, occur only along Little River, Rockfish Creek, and a couple of other tributaries of the Cape Fear River. A third, Mesic Pine Flatwoods (Little River Variant), occurs only in the Fort Bragg section of Little River. The only current North Carolina populations of three rare plants occur in the Hoke County portion of Fort Bragg: peelbark St. John'swort (*Hypericum fasciculatum*), spiked medusa orchid (*Pteroglossaspis ecristata*), Carolina pineland-cress (*Warea cuneifolia*). Similarly, three moth species have not been found in the state away from the base, and the broad-winged sedge grasshopper (*Stethophyma celata*) is known from fewer than five sites in the state. Lark sparrows (*Chondestes grammacus*) breed in North Carolina only on Fort Bragg and Camp Mackall. Remarkably, the entire range of St. Francis' satyr is within Fort Bragg.

Outside of Fort Bragg, Hoke County also harbors high quality examples of natural communities. Antioch Bay is the finest example of a Cypress Savanna in the state and supports populations of eight rare plant species and nine rare animals. The Lumber River is a state designated Natural and Scenic River; its floodplain supports high quality cypress-gum and bottomland hardwoods communities. Drowning Creek also features excellent floodplain communities and is a state-designated High Quality Water. One of the state's two currently known populations of twistleaf goldenrod (*Solidago tortifolia*) occurs at Quewhiffle Creek Sandhills, and one of the state's three populations of Florida peanut-grass (*Amphicarpum muehlenbergianum*) occurs at Antioch Bay. The sole population of Carolina sunrose (*Helianthemum carolinianum*) in the Sandhills region occurs at Calloway Sandhills, and two of the three known Sandhills populations of crested coralroot (an orchid, *Hexalectris spicata*) occur at McCain Sandhills and at Titi Bay. The population of sarvis holly (*Ilex amelanchier*) that extends along Drowning Creek and Lumber River is the state's largest.